IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A throttle assembly of an internal combustion engine comprising:

a throttle body having an opening therethrough;

a throttle plate positioned in the opening and constructed to control passage of combustion gas through the throttle body;[[and]]

a mechanical actuator engaged with the throttle plate and having a deadband engagement therebetween whereby a portion of input motion to the mechanical actuator is not ~~translated~~transmitted to the throttle plate[[.]]; and

an alternate air flow path in the throttle body to allow air into the internal combustion engine when the throttle plate is in a closed position,

the alternate air flow path including a nozzle positioned in the throttle body on a side opposite the opening having the throttle plate therein.

2. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 further comprising a throttle linkage attached to the mechanical actuator and wherein the mechanical actuator is arranged to allow movement of the throttle linkage to accelerate the internal combustion engine while maintaining the throttle plate in a position for at least a portion of the throttle linkage movement.

3. **(Canceled)**

4. **(Currently Amended)** The throttle assembly of claim [[3]]1 wherein the alternate air flow path is on a side of the throttle body generally opposite a user.

5. **(Canceled)**

6. **(Currently Amended)** The throttle assembly of claim [[5]]1 wherein the alternate air flow path includes a second opening in the throttle body in communication with the opening having the throttle plate therein.

7. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 further comprising a recess in the mechanical actuator that is engagable with a throttle shaft supporting the throttle plate in the opening of the throttle body such that a position of the throttle shaft is independent of an input to the mechanical actuator in the deadband.

8. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 7 wherein the recess has a bowtie shaped cross-section.

9. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 wherein the mechanical actuator has an input and an output, and wherein the throttle assembly further includes a throttle linkage attached to the input of the mechanical actuator and wherein the mechanical actuator is constructed to allow rotation of the input that exceeds rotation of the output.

10. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 9 wherein the rotation of the input exceeds rotation of the output by approximately 17 degrees.

11. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 wherein the deadband engagement allows an input to the mechanical actuator to move up to approximately 20 degrees without affecting a position of the throttle plate.

12. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 wherein the mechanical actuator further comprises a first end engagable with the throttle plate and a second end engagable with a mount attached to the throttle body.

13. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 12 wherein the mount is a throttle position sensor and the mechanical actuator is rotatable relative thereto.

14. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 13 wherein the throttle plate, the mechanical actuator, and the throttle position sensor share a common axis of rotation wherein rotation of the mechanical actuator is sensed by the throttle position sensor while the throttle plate remains stationary for a portion of a total rotation range of the mechanical actuator.

15. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 wherein the mechanical actuator has a body and an arm extending therefrom wherein the arm is pivotally connected to a throttle linkage.

16. **(Original)** The throttle assembly of claim 1 incorporated into at least one of an outboard motor,an ATV, a snowmobile, and a motorcycle.

17. **(Currently Amended)** An outboard motor comprising:

an engine mounted on a midsection attachable to a transom of a boat;

a throttle body attached to the engine and having a passage therethrough;

a throttle plate rotatably positioned in the passage;

a throttle linkage in operable association with the throttle plate to rotate the throttle plate in the passage of the throttle body;[[and]]

an actuator positioned between the throttle linkage and the throttle plate such that the throttle plate is disengaged from operable association with the throttle linkage during a range of engine operation[[.]];

a throttle plate shaft extending through the throttle body and having the throttle plate attached thereto;

an input shaft extending from the actuator; and

a throttle position sensor positioned to directly sense position of the actuator input shaft,

the actuator having a cylindrical body having the input shaft extending from one end and a recess constructed in an opposite end to receive a portion of the throttle plate shaft therein,

the input shaft of the actuator being directly coupled to the throttle position sensor such that rotation of the actuator results in a change to a throttle position sensor signal.

18. **(Original)** The outboard motor of claim 17 wherein the range of engine operation is defined as an idle operation to a low speed operation.

19. **(Canceled)**

20. **(Currently Amended)** The outboard motor of claim [[19]]17 further comprising a bushing having a bearing surface and positioned about an end of the throttle plate shaft and constructed to support the actuator about the bearing surface.

21. **(Canceled)**

22. **(Currently Amended)** The outboard motor of claim [[21]]17 wherein the throttle plate shaft has a roll pin passing therethrough that loosely engages the recess in the cylindrical body such that the actuator is free to partially rotate relative to the throttle shaft.

23 **(Canceled)**

24. **(Original)** The outboard motor of claim 17 wherein the engine is operable in a stratified combustion operation and a homogeneous combustion operation and the throttle plate is mechanically disassociated with the throttle linkage when in stratified combustion operation until the engine transitions to the homogeneous combustion operation.

25. **(Currently Amended)** An engine control system comprising:

a throttle linkage;

a mechanical actuator connected to the throttle linkage;

a throttle body having a first opening therein;

a throttle plate positioned in the first opening of the throttle body and rotatable between a closed position and an open position, the throttle plate rotatably connected to the mechanical actuator such that the mechanical actuator is allowed to partially rotate relative to the throttle plate in response to an input from the throttle linkage; and

an air intake bypass constructed to maintain flow of combustion air when the throttle plate is in the closed position[[.]],

the air intake bypass being in a side of the throttle body opposite the one having the throttle plate therein.

26. **(Original)** The engine control system of claim 25 further comprising a throttle plate position sensor positioned about an end of the mechanical actuator and directly coupled thereto, the throttle position sensor configured to sense rotation of the mechanical actuator.

27. **(Original)** The engine control system of claim 25 wherein the air intake bypass is in the throttle body.

28. **(Canceled)**

29. **(Original)** The engine control system of claim 25 further comprising a spacer disposed between the mechanical actuator and the throttle body and constructed to prevent wear therebetween.

30. **(Original)** The engine control system of claim 25 wherein the mechanical actuator is allowed to rotate at least ten percent of a total range of rotation of the throttle plate without affecting the position of the throttle plate.

31. – 47. **(Canceled)**

48. **(Original)** A method of minimizing noise emitted from an intake of an internal combustion engine comprising:

providing an air bypass in a location to minimize noise travel toward a user while providing sufficient air for a given range of engine operation, the air bypass having an opening open to atmosphere and directed in a direction different than that of a throttle plate; and

allowing acceleration within the given range of operation without a corresponding change in throttle plate position.

49. **(Original)** The method of claim 48 wherein the given range of operation is from an idle operation to a low speed operation.

50. **(Original)** The method of claim 49 wherein low speed operation is determined when the engine transitions from a stratified combustion charge to a homogenous combustion charge.

51. **(Original)** The method of claim 48 further comprising at least partially opening the throttle plate when the engine requires a generally homogeneous combustion charge.

52. **(Original)** The method of claim 48 further comprising completely closing the throttle plate during deceleration of the engine prior to desiring an idle engine speed.

53. **(Original)** A method of operating an internal combustion engine comprising the step of increasing an amount of fuel provided to a combustion chamber while maintaining a closed throttle plate position.

54. **(New)** A throttle assembly of an internal combustion engine comprising:

a throttle body having an opening therethrough;

a throttle plate positioned in the opening and constructed to control passage of combustion gas through the throttle body; and

a mechanical actuator engaged with the throttle plate and having a deadband engagement therebetween whereby a portion of input motion to the mechanical actuator is not transmitted to the throttle plate; and

a throttle position sensor associated with the mechanical actuator and capable of sensing movement of the mechanical actuator during the portion of input motion to the mechanical actuator which is not transmitted to the throttle plate.

55. **(New)** The throttle assembly of claim 54 wherein predetermined engine operating parameters are adjusted during the portion of a total rotation range of the mechanical actuator in response to a signal from the throttle position sensor.

56. **(New)** The throttle assembly of claim 54 wherein the throttle plate, the mechanical actuator, and the throttle position sensor have a common axis of rotation.